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Sen. Allen and Rep. Walker introduce legislation to aid Maritime Heritage Alliance

LANSING – Legislation to assist the Maritime Heritage Alliance of Traverse City by granting the Mackinac Island State Park Commission greater flexibility was introduced today in the Senate and will be introduced on Tuesday in the House of Representatives, announced Sen. Jason Allen and Rep. Howard Walker.

“The historic sloop ‘Welcome’ has made Grand Traverse Bay its home and it is appropriate that it be allowed to remain permanently,” Allen said. “Our legislation would provide flexibility to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission by allowing the divestiture of property that has no current or potential value to the purposes of the commission. We want to give the commission the tools they need to properly manage their assets.”

Allen and Walker decided to sponsor the legislation after being approached by the MHA. The Alliance holds a lease on a sloop owned by the commission, known as the “Welcome,” which is recognized as a State of Michigan historic vessel.

Senate Bill 1044 and the soon to be introduced House version would allow the commission to transfer the title of the Welcome to MHA. The MHA would like to obtain the title so it could be used as an asset for the purpose of soliciting future grant dollars.

In 1992 the MHA entered into a 20 year lease with the commission in order to acquire and subsequently rehabilitate the Welcome. After more than 40,000 hours of labor by MHA volunteers, they were finally able to launch the sloop this past summer.

“The ‘Welcome’ has certainly been a great addition to the Maritime Heritage Alliance,” said Walker, R-Traverse City. “Providing a vehicle for the MHA to purchase this historic ship will help to ensure that it has a permanent tool in its arsenal when applying for grants, and attracting tourists to Traverse City and the surrounding area.”

SB 1044 was referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs and an identical version will be introduced in the House of Representatives on Tuesday.

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